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MINUTES

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE FIFTH

Convention of Delegates

FROM THE

ABOLITION SOCIETIES

Eſtabliſhed in different Parts of the United States,

ASSEMBLED AT

PHILADELPHIA,

ON THE FIRST DAY OF JUNE, ONE THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED AND NINETY-EIGHT, AND CONTINUED, BY ADJOURNMENTS, UNTIL THE SIXTH DAY OF THE SAME MONTH, INCLUSIVE.

Philadelphia:

PRINTED BY ZACHARIAH POULSON, JUNIOR,
No. 106, *Cheſnut-ſtreet.*
Nearly oppoſite to the Bank of North America.

1798.

MINUTES

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE FIFTH

Convention of Delegates.

June first, 1798.

IN conformity to the recommendation of the Convention of laſt year, a number of Repreſentatives from the different Abolition Societies, eſtabliſhed in various parts of the United States, convened this day in the City-hall, in the city of Philadelphia, when, from credentials produced, it appeared that the following perſons were duly appointed delegates, *viz.*

Theodore Foſter, Thomas Tillinghaſt, } *From Providence.*

Joſeph Bloomfield, Richard Hartſhorne, William Cox, junior, Joſeph Sloane, Clement Hall, } *From New-Jerſey.*

Benjamin

Benjamin Rush, Caſpar Wiſtar, junior, William Rawle, James Todd, Thomas P. Cope, Walter Franklin, James Milnor,	*From Pennſylvania.*
Tarlton W. Pleaſants, Joſeph Anthony,	*From Richmond.*

Of whom the following appeared and took their ſeats, *viz.*

Theodore Foſter,	Walter Franklin,
Thomas Tillinghaſt,	James Milnor,
Joſeph Bloomfield,	Tarlton W. Pleaſants,
William Rawle,	James Todd,
Thomas P. Cope,	Benjamin Rush.

The Convention proceeded to the election of a Preſident, when, on counting the ballots, it appeared, that Joſeph Bloomfield was duly elected.

Timothy Paxſon, was appointed Secretary, and Joſeph Fry, Door-keeper.

Communications from Providence, Pennſylvania and Richmond Societies were read, and

Ordered to lie on the table.

A letter dated June 1ſt. 1798, from the Secretary of the Treaſury of the United States, to the Preſident of the Convention, reſpecting the communication addreſſed to him in behalf of the laſt Convention, was read, and

Ordered to lie on the table.

Adjourned till Monday, 5 o'clock, P. M.

June

June fourth, 1798.

Preſent:

Joſeph Bloomfield,	Tarlton W. Pleaſants,
Theodore Foſter,	Richard Hartſhorne,
Thomas P. Cope,	James Todd,
Walter Franklin,	Benjamin Ruſh,
James Milnor,	Caſpar Wiſtar, junior.

Edward Miller, Valentine Seaman and Samuel Boyd, from the Abolition Society of New-York, and Cæſar A. Rodney from the Abolition Society of Wilmington, attended and produced credentials, from which it appeared, that Samuel Latham Mitchel, Thomas Eddy, Edward Miller, Valentine Seaman and Samuel Boyd were duly appointed delegates from the former, and Cæſar A. Rodney and James A. Bayard, from the latter Society.

Communications from the New-York, New-Jerſey and Alexandria Societies were read, and

Ordered to lie on the table.

From the laſt mentioned communication it appeared, that Samuel Stanſbury was duly appointed a delegate from the Abolition Society of Alexandria.

A communication from William Cox, junior, addreſſed to the Preſident, apologizing for his abſence, was read and deemed ſatisfactory.

On motion,

Reſolved, That Theodore Foſter, Edward Miller, Richard Hartſhorne, James Milnor, Thomas P. Cope, Cæſar A. Rodney and Tarlton

Tarlton W. Pleaſants, be a committee to take into conſideration the communications from the ſeveral abolition ſocieties, and report the meaſures neceſſary to be adopted in purſuance thereof, as well as ſuch other objects as may to them appear proper for the attention of the Convention.

A letter from the Secretary of State of the United States, addreſſed to the Preſident of the Convention, was read, and

Ordered to lie on the table.

On motion,

Reſolved, That any Member of a Society, eſtabliſhed for the abolition of ſlavery, be permitted to attend the proceedings of this Convention, being introduced by a member thereof.

On motion,

Reſolved, That the letters from the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treaſury, be referred to the committee on the communications from the ſeveral ſocieties.

Adjourned till to-morrow 5 o'clock, P. M.

June fifth, 1798.

Preſent:

Joſeph Bloomfield, Preſident.

Theodore Foſter,	Caſpar Wiſtar, junior,
Thomas Tillinghaſt,	James Todd,
Richard Hartſhorne,	Thomas P. Cope,
Edward Miller,	Walter Franklin,

Valentine

Valentine Seaman,	James Milnor,
Samuel Boyd,	Cæſar A. Rodney,
Benjamin Ruſh,	Tarlton W. Pleaſants.

The committee appointed to take into conſideration, the communications from the ſeveral Abolition Societies, and to ſuggeſt ſuch other objects as might be thought proper to engage the notice of the Convention, made report, which, having been twice read, was, with ſome amendments, adopted, as follows,

The committee to whom were referred, the ſeveral communications made to the Convention, and who were directed to conſider and arrange the objects proper for the attention of the Convention, report,

That they have duly conſidered the reports transmitted to this Convention, from the ſeveral Societies, and are much gratified to obſerve the perſevering attention they exhibit to the objects for which they were originally inſtituted, and particularly to the recommendations of former Conventions. And although the reports received are not ſo numerous as is deſirable, and do not comprehend all the objects recommended; yet the following ſhort review of them will be ſufficient to prove, that a laudable degree of diligence has been exerted by ſeveral ſocieties.

Rhode-Iſland.

In purſuance of the injunctions of the laſt Convention, the Society of Providence have tranſmitted their conſtitution, the number of Members, a liſt of officers, and the exiſting laws

laws of the ſtate of Rhode-Iſland, concerning ſlavery. They repreſent the condition of the people of color to be eligible, and progreſſively improving; they ſtate their ſucceſs in reſcuing a conſiderable number of perſons from illegal ſervitude, but they have not preſerved any regular reports of trials and adjudications in theſe caſes. Some attention has been paid to the education of people of color, but this object has not been purſued ſo far as could be wiſhed. Occaſional diſcourſes on the ſubject of ſlavery and the ſlave-trade, have been delivered, but no regiſter of manumiſſions has been regularly kept.

New-York.

This Society have made ſucceſsful exertions to emancipate perſons illegally held in bondage. The ſchool for the inſtruction of blacks and other people of color, as well as their children, is ſtill continued in an advantageous manner, and ſeems likely to extend its uſefulneſs much further. They ſtate that a number of benevolent perſons in Queen's county on Long-Iſland have raiſed a fund for the education of children of color in the ſame ſchool with white children, which, they conceive, has produced great benefit to the community. A bill for the gradual abolition of ſlavery, after paſſing the Houſe of Aſſembly, was unfortunately loſt in the Senate; but the diſcuſſion thereby produced is preſumed to have done great ſervice, in diſſipating prejudices and preparing the public mind for a different deciſion on ſome future occaſion. Doubts concerning

concerning the manumiſſion of a particular claſs of people of color, formerly liberated by certain individuals of the ſociety of Friends, are now removed by an act of the Legiſlature for that purpoſe. The ſociety have alſo furniſhed a liſt of their preſent officers, and of the members elected ſince their laſt report.

New-Jerſey.

Since the laſt meeting of the Convention, the Legiſlature of this ſtate have paſſed an act in ſome degree ameliorating the condition of the blacks, and other people of color, a copy of which is annexed to the preſent report of the Society. A liſt of their officers for the preſent year, is included. In the city of Burlington, exertions have been made by public ſpirited individuals to extend the benefit of inſtruction to blacks and other perſons of color, and generally with great ſucceſs, as will more fully appear by recurring to a report to the Society from their ſtanding committee. An emancipating clauſe in the act of the Legiſlature abovementioned was loſt in the Houſe of Aſſembly, only by one voice. No orations on the ſubject of ſlavery have been attempted in this ſtate, being thought unpopular in Eaſt Jerſey, and unneceſſary in Weſt Jerſey.

Pennſylvania.

This Society have tranſmitted a liſt of their officers, and of members elected ſince the laſt convention. They have been unable to procure any reports of adjudged caſes relative to blacks and other people of color, of ſufficient importance to be laid before the Convention.

It is intended to erect a commodious building for a ſchool, if their funds ſhould prove ſufficient.

Virginia.

The Society of Alexandria ſtate that many of their proſecutions for the recovery of the freedom of blacks and other perſons of color, have been favorably terminated, and that conſiderable progreſs has been made in the education of thoſe people, as well as in many other objects of their inſtitution.

The ſociety of Richmond report, that they have ſucceeded in a number of ſuits inſtituted for the relief of perſons illegally detained in ſervitude; and that they contemplate the eſtabliſhment of a ſchool for the inſtruction of blacks and other people of color, but are apprehenſive that their funds will be ſcarcely ſufficient for this purpoſe.

In order to promote the objects of the Convention, the committee conceive it would be proper again to addreſs the ſeveral ſocieties, and to recommend a more punctual attention to the buſineſs of appointing and ſending forward Members to attend the next meeting in this city. From a variety of cauſes, ſeveral matters enjoined by former Conventions remain either partially or totally unexecuted; and thereby many important advantages are ſuſpended or entirely fruſtrated. As a remedy for this delinquency, the committee adviſe a renewal of many former injunctions, and a preſſing requeſt that greater attention be hereafter given to them. The utility ariſing from the

the addreſſes of former Conventions to the blacks and other people of color is generally admitted to have been great and extenſive; and as ample room for the operation of this benefit is ſtill preſumed to exiſt, it may be adviſable, to order a republication of one or more of theſe addreſſes, for the purpoſe of again attempting to circulate them as far as poſſible.

The ſituation of public affairs, in the opinion of the committee, renders the preſent time unſuitable for the adoption of any new meaſures of importance. In many of the United States a peculiar degree of caution in the management of this buſineſs becomes neceſſary; and on this ground it is deemed more prudent to perſevere in the ſteps which have already been ſo judiciouſly taken, than to attempt, at this juncture, any material variation or extenſion of them.

The committee do not think it adviſable at preſent to take any further meaſures on the ſubject of the letters heretofore addreſſed by the Convention to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treaſury of the United States.

On behalf of the committee,

THEODORE FOSTER, *Chairman.*

On motion,

Reſolved, That Edward Miller, James Todd and Tarlton W. Pleaſants, be a committee to prepare and report an addreſs to the ſeveral Abolition Societies, conformably to the recommendations of the above report.

Information

Information being received by the Convention, that a number of veſſels are employed by citizens of the United States in the African ſlave-trade;

Ordered, That Walter Franklin, Valentine Seaman and Richard Hartſhorne be a committee to make enquiry on the ſubject and report thereon.

The Convention proceeded to the conſideration of the following paragraph, of the addreſs from the Richmond Society, *viz.*

" There appears to be an extenſive field " open in this ſtate for labor, and the funds " of the Society are too ſmall and inſufficient to accompliſh, in a proper manner, the " purpoſes of their Inſtitution, either for " the relief of numbers of unfortunate people, illegally detained in bondage, or in a " more general way to afford ſuitable inſtruction to the young blacks who have been " liberated: we have, therefore, been induced to believe, and ſubmit to your conſideration, whether it would not be adviſeable, " under ſuch circumſtances, to make ſome " regulations whereby thoſe Societies, which " are compoſed of numerous members, and " full handed, in places where few ſuffering " caſes may require aſſiſtance, may have it " in their power, in a regular manner, to " help the weak, and contribute, in a more " general and extenſive degree, to the promotion of thoſe important objects; for this " purpoſe we are free to propoſe for your " conſideration, the propriety of recommending

" ding the raiſing a general fund, to be made " up by the Abolition Societies, and to be " under the direction of the Convention, and " to be applied, from time to time, as they " may ſee cauſe."

A conſiderable portion of time having been occupied in deliberating thereon, the following reſolution was offered, *viz.*

Reſolved, That this Convention are of opinion, that it is inexpedient, to adopt any meaſures on the foregoing ſubject.

Ordered to lie on the table.

The Delegates from the New-York Society preſented to the Convention, for the uſe of the members, thirty copies of a diſcourſe on the ſubject of ſlavery, delivered April 12th. 1797, before ſaid ſociety, by Samuel Miller, one of the members thereof; and the like number of copies of another diſcourſe, on the ſame ſubject, by E. H. Smith, a member of the Society, delivered April 11th. 1798.

Ordered, That two copies of the ſaid diſcourſes be delivered to each of the attending members of the Convention, one to the Secretary, and the remainder to the Preſident of of the Pennſylvania Abolition Society.

Adjourned till to-morrow 5 o'clock, P. M.

June

June ſixth, 1798.

Preſent:

Joſeph Bloomfield, Preſident,

Theodore Foſter,	Caſpar Wiſtar, junior,
Thomas Tillinghaſt,	James Todd,
Richard Hartſhorne,	Thomas P. Cope,
Edward Miller,	Walter Franklin,
Valentine Seaman,	James Milnor,
Samuel Boyd,	Cæſar A. Rodney,
Joſeph Sloane,	Tarlton W. Pleaſants.
Benjamin Ruſh,	

The reſolution yeſterday laid on the table, reſpecting the propoſition from the Richmond Society, was again taken up, and adopted.

The committee appointed to enquire reſpecting the information given at the laſt meeting, on the ſubject of a circuitous traffic in ſlaves, carried on by citizens of the United States, made report, as follows,

The committee appointed to enquire, reſpecting the information received by the Convention, of a number of veſſels employed by citizens of the United States, in the ſlave trade, beg leave to report,

" That the reſult of their enquiry has been, " a conviction on their minds, that a trade " of this kind is carried on in the following " manner—Veſſels are fitted out with cargoes " for one of the Weſt-India Iſlands; parts of " which cargoes are there diſpoſed of, and " with the proceeds, ſlaves are purchaſed and " carried to other of the Weſt-India Iſlands " and

" and ſold. Other veſſels are loaded with rum " for ſome place in Africa, where, we have " ſtrong reaſon to believe, though no official " proof, that ſlaves are purchaſed, tranſported " to the Weſt-Indies, and ſold."

RICHARD HARTSHORNE,
VALENTINE SEAMAN,
WALTER FRANKLIN.

June 6th. 1798.

Whereupon,

Reſolved, That it be recommended to the ſeveral Abolition Societies in the United States, to make particular enquiry on this ſubject, and report to the enſuing Convention.

In conſequence of information furniſhed by a delegate from the Richmond Society,

Reſolved, As the opinion of this Convention, that it is conſiſtent with good policy, to admit ſlave holders into any of the Societies, where it ſhall appear, that the candidates are really attached to the cauſe of abolition.

The committee appointed to prepare an addreſs to the ſeveral Abolition Societies in the United States, produced one, which having been twice read, and amended, was adopted as follows, *viz.*

To the Society for promoting the Abolition of Slavery, &c.

THE Convention of delegates from the Abolition Societies eſtabliſhed in different parts of the United States, aſſembled at Philadelphia,

ladelphia, congratulate their conſtituents on the general progreſs of their objects ſince laſt meeting, and on the union of ſentiment, and harmony of deliberation, which has prevailed in all their proceedings.

The aſſembling in Convention, at proper intervals, has produced ſo many advantages in combining the views and operations of the friends of emancipation throughout the United States, that we are perſuaded you will unite with us in opinion, that it is expedient that another Convention of delegates from the ſeveral Abolition Societies, be held in this city on the firſt Wedneſday of June, in the year one thouſand eight hundred.

The alteration in the period of meeting we have adopted under a conſideration of the peculiar ſituation of our country, and the ſtate of the objects which have hitherto occupied our attention; but, we earneſtly requeſt, that a general repreſentation, and a punctual attendance, may take place at the time recommended.

Although, from the reports of ſuch of the Societies as have ſent delegates to this Convention, we have obſerved, with encouragement and pleaſure, the perſeverance that is uſed, and the progreſs that is made, in the great work for which we have aſſociated; yet, we cannot help noticing, with regret, the abſence of many of our members, and the total omiſſion of ſeveral of the Societies to appoint Repreſentatives, or to comply with the requeſt of the laſt Convention, that, where it was not agreed to ſend delegates, ſuch determination and the cauſe of it might

be reported to the Convention in writing. To thoſe ſocieties, therefore, which have failed in this reſpect, we are induced earneſtly to repeat the requeſt, and to urge their particular attention thereto.

By ſome of the Societies the general requiſitions of former Conventions have not yet been anſwered or complied with, and by others only in part. An accurate table of theſe requiſitions, and the manner in which each Society had complied with them, was made out by the laſt Convention and forwarded to the different Abolition Societies. By a reference thereto, and to the report of the committee of this Convention, to whom the ſeveral communications were referred, which is included in the copy of our proceedings herewith tranſmitted to you, you will obſerve what yet remains to be done; and we hope you will be able to make complete returns to the ſucceeding Convention, together with ſuch other information as may appear to you to be uſeful towards the important purpoſe of forming a hiſtory of the progreſs and ſtate of ſlavery in the United States.

Too much cannot be ſaid on the neceſſity of a conſtant attention to the ſubject of education. To prepare the minds of our unfortunate African brethren for that condition of freedom and rank in ſociety to which they muſt, ſooner or later, arrive—to diſſeminate among them uſeful inſtruction on moral and religious ſubjects, and to uſe our utmoſt endeavours to have ſchools eſtabliſhed, for the

purpoſe of teaching them to read and write, ought, we conceive, to be the primary object of all the Abolition Societies. We alſo think it of importance, at this particular period, to impreſs upon the minds of thoſe who are in bondage, the propriety of a quiet ſubmiſſion to the injunctions of their maſters, aſſuring them that by ſuch conduct they will be likely to experience not only the advantages of better treatment in their preſent ſituation, but alſo cauſe, perhaps, even their poſſeſſors to perceive the injuſtice that is attached to the principles of ſlavery.

Firmly perſuaded that conſiderable benefit has already reſulted from inculcating friendly advice to this oppreſſed people, and believing that the ſentiments contained in the addreſs of the former Conventions to the free blacks and other people of color in the United States cannot be too frequently repeated and enforced, we recommend to the conſideration of the Societies, the propriety of a republication of thoſe addreſſes by each ſociety, and ſuch communication and diſtribution thereof as may be beſt calculated to promote a beneficial effect.

The Convention having been informed, that veſſels are fitted out with cargoes for certain of the Weſt India Iſlands, parts of which cargoes are their diſpoſed of, and, with the proceeds, ſlaves are purchaſed and carried to other of the ſaid Iſlands, and ſold; alſo that other veſſels are loaded with rum, for certain ports in Africa, with the proceeds of which, we have reaſon to believe, the natives are purchaſed

purchaſed and afterwards conveyed and ſold as ſlaves in the Weſt Indies. We recommend a ſtrict enquiry to be made into the conduct of perſons thus offending againſt the dictates of humanity and the honor and intereſt of our country, that proper meaſures, to puniſh and prevent ſuch nefarious and diſgraceful practices, may be adopted.

We have thought it expedient to confine our attention, at preſent, principally to carrying into effect the meaſures heretofore adviſed. Let us, however, whilſt prudent and cautious, continue to be firm and ſincere. Let us embrace every opportunity which may offer for ameliorating the condition of ſlaves ſo far as the laws, under which we ſeverally act, will permit us to proceed. Let us do nothing which may juſtly draw forth the cenſure of our country, but act, in all things, with that moderation and propriety which have heretofore diſtinguiſhed the Abolition Societies.

We confidently truſt, that when the ſtorms, by which the world is at preſent agitated, ſhall have ſubſided, the light of truth will break through the dark gloom of oppreſſion—cruelty and injuſtice will not only hear, but obey, the voice of reaſon and religion; and in theſe United States the practice of the people will be conformable to their declaration—" That all men are born equally free, and have an unalienable right to Liberty."

Reſolved,

Reſolved, That one thouſand five hundred copies of the proceedings of this Convention be printed and diſtributed among the ſeveral Abolition Societies; and that James Todd, Walter Franklin, James Milnor and Thomas P. Cope, be a committee to ſuperintend the publication and diſtribution thereof.

Reſolved, That the Preſident and Secretary atteſt, with their ſignatures, copies of the addreſs of this Convention, and that one copy be tranſmitted, by the laſt named committee, to each Abolition Society.

Reſolved, That the ſame Committee have the minutes of this Convention fairly copied in the book provided for that purpoſe; and that they give three months notice, to each of the Societies, of the meeting of the next Convention.

Reſolved, That the thanks of this Convention be preſented, by the ſame committee, to the Preſident of the Common Council for the uſe of their chamber.

Adjourned, *ſine die.*

Publiſhed by order of the Convention,

TIMOTHY PAXSON *Secretary.*

Philadelphia, May 9th. 1798.